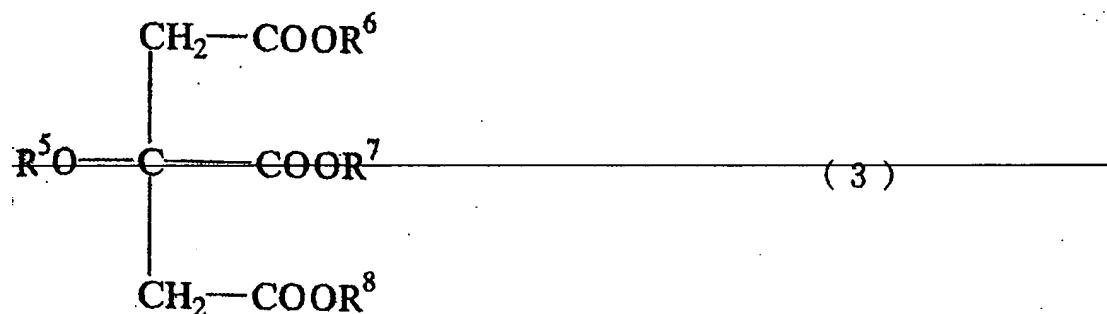


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

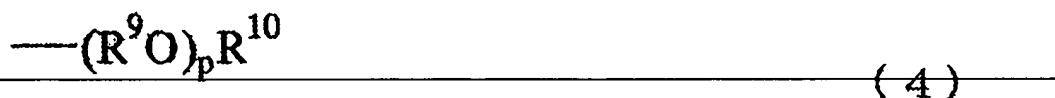
Please amend the claims as follows:

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS: (Claims As Filed 09/30/04)

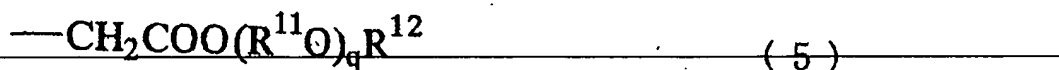
1. (Canceled)
2. (Currently Amended) An ester compound ~~represented by formula (3)~~



wherein R⁵ is H, a C₁₋₅-aliphatic acyl group or a C₆₋₁₂-aromatic acyl group; R⁶, R⁷ and R⁸ each represent a group of formula (4) or (5)



wherein R⁹ is a C₁₋₆-alkylene group; R¹⁰ is a C₁₋₁₀-straight or branched chain alkyl group, a C₆₋₁₂-aryl group, a C₇₋₁₅-arylalkyl group or a C₇₋₁₅-alkylaryl group; and p is an integer from 0 to 6; and



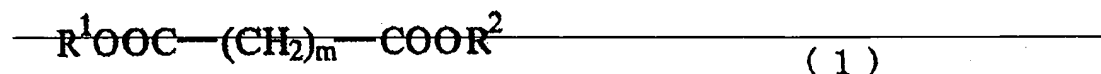
wherein R¹¹ is a C₁₋₆-alkylene group; R¹² is a C₁₋₁₀-straight or branched chain alkyl group, a C₆₋₁₂-aryl group, a C₇₋₁₅-arylalkyl group or a C₇₋₁₅-alkylaryl group; and q is an integer from 0 to 6;

~~with the proviso that the compound wherein R⁶, R⁷ and R⁸ are the same is excluded~~
selected from the group consisting of methoxycarbonylmethyl dimethyl citrate, methoxycarbonylmethyl diethyl citrate, methoxycarbonylmethyl dibutyl citrate, ethoxycarbonylmethyl dimethyl citrate, ethoxycarbonylmethyl dibutyl citrate, ethoxycarbonylmethyl dioctyl citrate, butoxycarbonylmethyl dimethyl citrate, butoxycarbonylmethyl diethyl citrate, butoxycarbonylmethyl dibutyl citrate, dimethoxycarbonylmethyl monomethyl citrate, dimethoxycarbonylmethyl monoethyl citrate, dimethoxycarbonylmethyl monobutyl citrate, diethoxycarbonylmethyl monomethyl citrate,

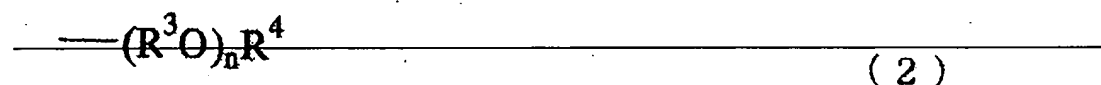
diethoxycarbonylmethyl monobutyl citrate, diethoxycarbonylmethyl monooctyl citrate, dibutoxycarbonylmethyl monomethyl citrate, dibutoxycarbonylmethyl monoethyl citrate, dibutoxycarbonylmethyl monobutyl citrate, and acetates thereof.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Currently Amended) A plasticizer for biodegradable aliphatic polyester resins according to claim 3, wherein the ester is a compound represented by formula (1)

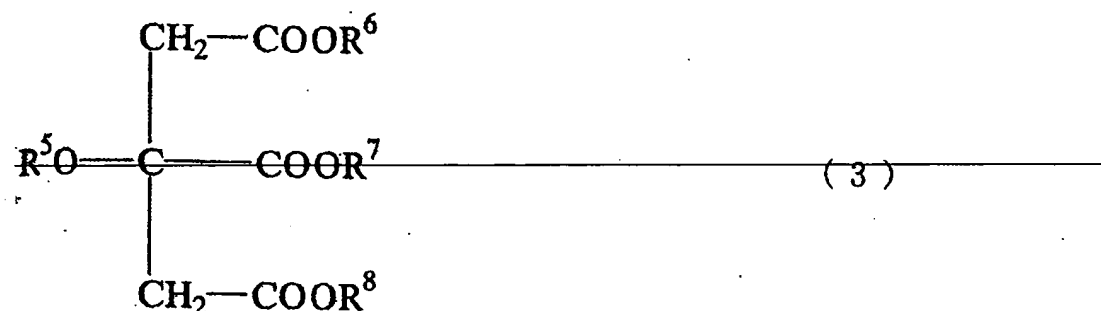


wherein R^1 and R^2 are different from each other and each represents a group of formula (2)



wherein R^3 is a C_{1-6} -alkylene group; R^4 is a C_{1-10} -straight or branched chain alkyl group, a C_{6-12} -aryl group, a C_{7-15} -arylalkyl group or a C_{7-15} -alkylaryl group; m is an integer from 0 to 8, and n is an integer from 0 to 6, the plasticizer comprising at least one ester compound selected from the group consisting of methyl diglycol butyldiglycol adipate, benzyl butyldiglycol adipate, and benzyl methyl diglycol adipate.

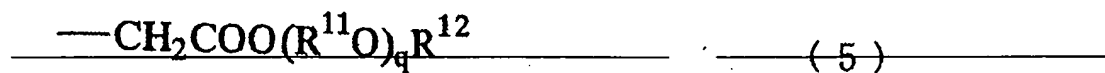
5. (Currently Amended) A plasticizer for biodegradable aliphatic polyester resins according to claim 3, wherein the ester is a compound represented by formula (3)



wherein R^5 is H, a C_{1-5} -aliphatic acyl group or a C_{6-12} -aromatic acyl group, and R^6 , R^7 and R^8 each represent a group of formula (4) or (5)



wherein R^9 is a C_{1-6} alkylene group; R^{10} is a C_{1-10} straight or branched chain alkyl group, a C_{6-12} aryl group, a C_{7-15} arylalkyl group or a C_{7-15} alkylaryl group; and p is an integer from 0 to 6; and

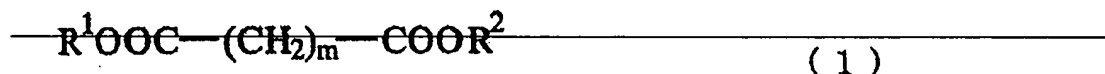


wherein R^{11} is a C_{1-6} alkylene group; R^{12} is a C_{1-10} straight or branched chain alkyl group, a C_{6-12} aryl group, a C_{7-15} arylalkyl group or a C_{7-15} alkylaryl group; and q is an integer from 0 to 6;

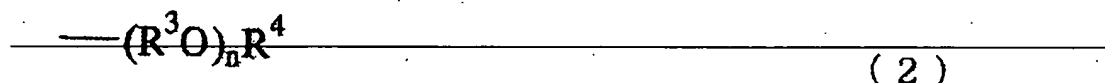
~~with the proviso that the compound wherein R^6 , R^7 and R^8 are the same is excluded~~
the plasticizer comprising at least one ester compound selected from the group consisting of methoxycarbonylmethyl dimethyl citrate, methoxycarbonylmethyl diethyl citrate, methoxycarbonylmethyl dibutyl citrate, ethoxycarbonylmethyl dimethyl citrate, ethoxycarbonylmethyl dibutyl citrate, ethoxycarbonylmethyl dioctyl citrate, butoxycarbonylmethyl dimethyl citrate, butoxycarbonylmethyl diethyl citrate, butoxycarbonylmethyl dibutyl citrate, dimethoxycarbonylmethyl monomethyl citrate, dimethoxycarbonylmethyl monoethyl citrate, dimethoxycarbonylmethyl monobutyl citrate, diethoxycarbonylmethyl monomethyl citrate, diethoxycarbonylmethyl monobutyl citrate, diethoxycarbonylmethyl monoethyl citrate, dibutoxycarbonylmethyl monomethyl citrate, dibutoxycarbonylmethyl monoethyl citrate, dibutoxycarbonylmethyl monobutyl citrate, and acetates thereof.

6.-8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently Amended) A biodegradable resin composition according to claim 8, wherein the plasticizer is a compound represented by formula (1)



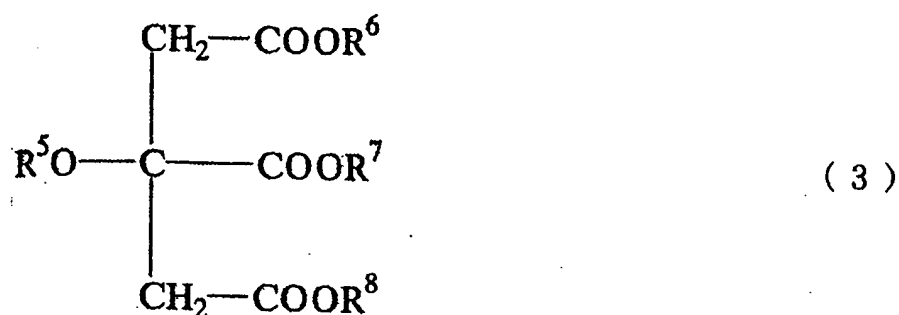
wherein R^1 and R^2 are different from each other and each represents a group of formula (2)



wherein R^3 is a C_{1-6} alkylene group; R^4 is a C_{1-10} straight or branched chain alkyl group, a C_{6-12} aryl group, a C_{7-15} arylalkyl group or a C_{7-15} alkylaryl group; m is an integer from 0 to 8; and n is an integer from 0 to 6 (i) a biodegradable aliphatic polyester resin and (ii) a plasticizer comprising at least one ester compound selected from the group consisting of methyl diglycol ethyldiglycol

adipate, methyl diglycol butyldiglycol adipate, ethyldiglycol butyldiglycol adipate, benzyl methyl diglycol adipate, benzyl ethyldiglycol adipate, benzyl butyldiglycol adipate, methyl dipropylene glycol ethyl dipropylene glycol adipate, methyl dipropylene glycol butyl dipropylene glycol adipate, ethyl dipropylene glycol butyl dipropylene glycol adipate, benzyl methyl dipropylene glycol adipate, benzyl ethyl dipropylene glycol adipate, and benzyl butyl dipropylene glycol adipate.

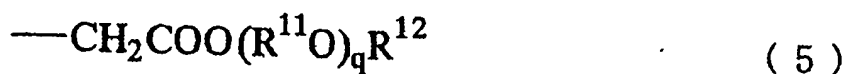
10. (Currently Amended) A biodegradable resin composition ~~according to claim 8, wherein the plasticizer is a compound comprising~~ (i) a biodegradable aliphatic polyester resin and (ii) a plasticizer comprising at least one ester compound represented by formula (3)



wherein R⁵ is H, a C₁₋₅ aliphatic acyl group or a C₆₋₁₂ aromatic acyl group, and R⁶, R⁷ and R⁸ each represent a group of formula (4) or (5)



wherein R⁹ is a C₁₋₆ alkylene group; R¹⁰ is a C₁₋₁₀ straight- or branched-chain alkyl group, a C₆₋₁₂ aryl group, a C₇₋₁₅ arylalkyl group or a C₇₋₁₅ alkylaryl group; and p is an integer from 0 to 6; and



wherein R¹¹ is a C₁₋₆ alkylene group; R¹² is a C₁₋₁₀ straight- or branched-chain alkyl group, a C₆₋₁₂ aryl group, a C₇₋₁₅ arylalkyl group or a C₇₋₁₅ alkylaryl group; and q is an integer from 0 to 6;

with the proviso that the compound wherein R⁶, R⁷ and R⁸ are the same is excluded.

11. (Currently Amended) A biodegradable resin composition according to ~~any one of claims 8, 9 and 10~~ claim 9, wherein the biodegradable aliphatic polyester resin is at least

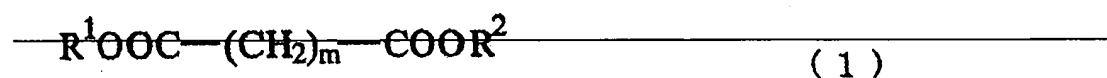
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one member selected from the group consisting of resins obtainable by condensation of hydroxycarboxylic acid(s) and resins obtainable by condensation of aliphatic dicarboxylic acid(s) and aliphatic diol(s).

12. (Original) A resin composition according to claim 11, wherein the biodegradable aliphatic polyester resin is a poly(lactic acid).

13. (Original) A resin composition according to claim 11, wherein the biodegradable aliphatic polyester resin is polybutylene succinate, polybutylene succinate adipate or a mixture thereof.

14. (Currently Amended) A method for plasticizing a biodegradable aliphatic polyester resin, the method comprising adding to a biodegradable aliphatic polyester resin an ester compound represented by formula (1)



wherein R^1 and R^2 are different from each other and each represents a group of formula (2)

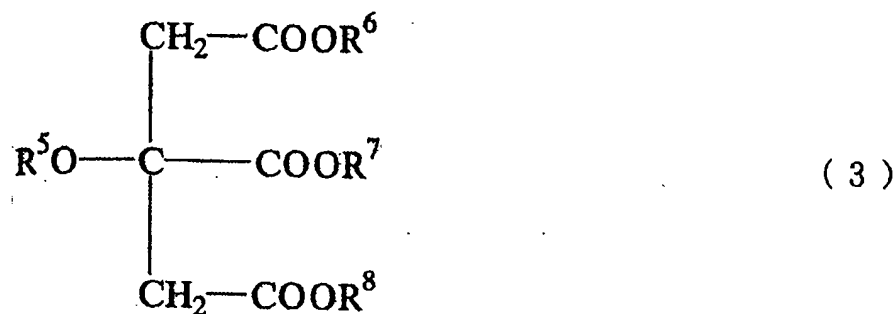


wherein R^3 is a C_{1-6} -alkylene group; R^4 is a C_{1-10} straight or branched chain alkyl group, a C_{6-12} aryl group, C_{7-15} -arylalkyl group or a C_{7-15} -alkylaryl group; m is an integer from 0 to 8, and n is an integer from 0 to 6 at least one ester compound selected from the group consisting of methyl diglycol ethyldiglycol adipate, methyl diglycol butyldiglycol adipate, ethyldiglycol butyldiglycol adipate, benzyl methyl diglycol adipate, benzyl ethyldiglycol adipate, benzyl butyldiglycol adipate, methyl dipropylene glycol ethyl dipropylene glycol adipate, methyl dipropylene glycol butyl dipropylene glycol adipate, ethyl dipropylene glycol butyl dipropylene glycol adipate, benzyl methyl dipropylene glycol adipate, benzyl ethyl dipropylene glycol adipate, and benzyl butyl dipropylene glycol adipate.

15. (Original) A method according to claim 14, wherein the biodegradable aliphatic polyester resin is a poly(lactic acid).

16. (Original) A method according to claim 14, wherein the biodegradable aliphatic polyester resin is polybutylene succinate, polybutylene succinate adipate or a mixture thereof.

17. (Currently Amended) A method for plasticizing a biodegradable aliphatic polyester resin, the method comprising adding to a biodegradable aliphatic polyester resin at least one ester compound selected from the group consisting of an ester compound represented by formula (3)

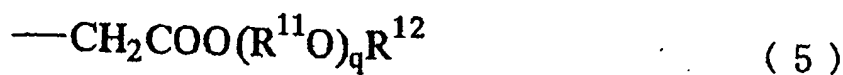


wherein R⁵ is H, a C₁₋₅ aliphatic acyl group or a C₆₋₁₂ aromatic acyl group; and R⁶, R⁷ and R⁸ each represent a group of formula (4) or (5)



wherein

R⁹ is a C₁₋₆ alkylene group; R¹⁰ is a C₁₋₁₀ straight- or branched-chain alkyl group, a C₆₋₁₂ aryl group, a C₇₋₁₅ arylalkyl group or a C₇₋₁₅ alkylaryl group; and p is an integer from 0 to 6; and



wherein R¹¹ is a C₁₋₆ alkylene group; R¹² is a C₁₋₁₀ straight- or branched-chain alkyl group, a C₆₋₁₂ aryl group, a C₇₋₁₅ arylalkyl group or a C₇₋₁₅ alkylaryl group; and q is an integer from 0 to 6;

with the proviso that the compound wherein R⁶, R⁷ and R⁸ are the same is excluded.

18. (Original) A method according to claim 17, wherein the biodegradable aliphatic polyester resin is a poly(lactic acid).

19. (Original) A method according to claim 17, wherein the biodegradable aliphatic polyester resin is polybutylene succinate, polybutylene succinate adipate or a mixture thereof.

20. (New) A compound selected from the group consisting of methyl diglycol butyldiglycol adipate, benzyl butyldiglycol adipate, and benzyl methyl diglycol adipate

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21. (New) A biodegradable resin composition according to claim 10, wherein the biodegradable aliphatic polyester resin is at least one member selected from the group consisting of resins obtainable by condensation of hydroxycarboxylic acid(s) and resins obtainable by condensation of aliphatic dicarboxylic acid(s) and aliphatic diol(s).

22. (New) A resin composition according to claim 21, wherein the biodegradable aliphatic polyester resin is a poly(lactic acid).

23. (New) A resin composition according to claim 21, wherein the biodegradable aliphatic polyester resin is polybutylene succinate, polybutylene succinate adipate or a mixture thereof.